

# CERTAIN CHOICE EXHIBITS OF ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, CHENNAI



**Dr.C. Maheswaran, M.A., M.A., Ph.D.,**  
Curator (Anthropology Section),  
Government Museum,  
Egmore,  
Chennai-600 008.

Published

By

The Principal Secretary/Commissioner of Museums,  
Government Museum, Egmore,  
Chennai-600 008.





# **CERTAIN CHOICE EXHIBITS OF ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, CHENNAI**

**Dr.C. Maheswaran**, M.A., M.A., Ph.D.,  
Curator (Anthropology Section),  
Government Museum,  
Egmore,  
Chennai-600 008.

Published

by

The Principal Secretary/Commissioner of Museums,  
Government Museum, Egmore,  
Chennai-600 008.

2011

First Edition : 2011

Number of Copies : 250

©

The Principal Secretary / Commissioner of Museums,  
Government Museum,  
Chennai - 600 008.

Price : Rs.

Printed at: Anugraha Educational and Consultancy  
Services Pvt. Ltd.  
17/8, 8th East Street,  
Kamaraj Nagar, Thiruvannamiyur  
Chennai - 600 041.



**Dr. T.S.Sridhar, I.A.S.,**

Principal Secretary /

Commissioner of Museums,

Government Museum,

Chennai-600 008.



Office: 044- 28193778

Fax : 044- 28193035

Email: govtmuse@md4.vsnl.net.in

## **FOREWORD**

Government Museum, Chennai is designated as the 'Cradle of Anthropology of our Indian sub-continent', owing to the possession of Foote's Collection of Stone Tools, Rea's Collection of Adichanallur Antiquities, Breek's Collection of Nilgiri Antiquities, Collection of South Indian ethnographic artifacts by Thurston, Aiyappan & others, Arms of Tanjore Armoury & British East India Company, in its fold.

The Galleries of Anthropology comprising Prehistory, Indus Valley Civilization, Physical Anthropology, Ethnology, Arms, Folk Culture, Folk Arts, Puppetry, Musical Instruments got refurbished with modern lighting, display and signages from the generous grant of Government of Tamilnadu, by the painstaking efforts of our team of [both curatorial & gallery] staff.

The entire 'Front Building', the heritage building of the Museum, structurally became weak due to passage of time. Hence, at the first stage, the heritage building was strengthened on certain vital avenues such as reinforcing the ceiling of backyard by replacing the termite eaten beam of timber with iron girder, retouching the paintings on ceiling with professional artists from the Government College of Fine Arts, Chennai and replacing of broken stained glass works with new ones. Apart from fabrication of modern teakwood showcases, panels in teakwood were added to display an array of spears, ceremonial gauntlet & a pair of shields of Tanjore Armoury and chain shots, front loading fire arms & swords of the English East India Company. The cannons of relatively bigger size which were displayed erstwhile on floor area were given face-lift presentation, by accommodating them over a newly constructed concrete reinforced raised platform. The set of Spanish armoury acquired as Manila war trophy were displayed in a specially designed mega-sized wall mounted showcase (unlike its earlier presentation as open exhibits mounted on wall directly) so as to reiterate safety and longevity to these exhibits of rarity.

Museum lighting with energy efficient CFL lamps, LED lit name boards for all the galleries were taken up, apart from providing general lighting on modern lines. The entire showcases presenting collection of weapons of Tanjore armoury were illuminated with energy efficient CFL lamps emitting low heat radiation for ensuring better longevity to the exhibits and emulating appreciation of visitors to the priceless exhibits instead of the erstwhile presentation in natural lighting.

The Curator for Anthropology, Dr. C. Maheswaran was entrusted with the task of preparing a coffee table book of certain choice exhibits of Anthropology from the varied collection of Government Museum, Chennai. Consequently, this coffee table book gets its timely genesis.

I wish to congratulate Dr. C. Maheswaran for bringing out this book within a short span of time so as release it during the inauguration of refurbished galleries of Anthropology, after a gap of twelve years.

I hope that this book will embellish the book shelves and coffee tables of visitors of all walks of life.

*T. S. Sridhar*

[T. S. Sridhar]



Dr. C. Maheswaran,  
Curator [Anthropology, Section],

Government Museum,  
Egmore,  
Chennai - 600 008.

## PREFACE

Consequent to the successful completion of refurbishment of all the Galleries of Anthropology at Government Museum, Chennai, it was realized that it will be befitting to present a 'Coffee Table Book' highlighting certain choice exhibits of Anthropology and release the same during 'Inauguration of the Refurbished Galleries of Anthropology'.

Indeed, it was a Herculean task for me to select the choice exhibits out of the multifarious collection of Anthropology Section of the Museum. Judicious selection of certain choice exhibits was attempted which resulted into this present form of coffee table book, projecting 65 exhibits of Anthropology [both in display and storage]. The book was christened accordingly as "Certain Choice Exhibits of Anthropology at the Government Museum, Chennai".

I am thankful to Dr. T.S. Sridhar, I.A.S., our beloved Principal Secretary/Commissioner of Museums who remains as the kindling force, guiding spirit and constant source of inspiration in all my academic-cum-professional ventures.

I hope that this book will be a welcome addition amidst the visitors of all walks of life, those pay a visit to this Museum of high stature.

[C. MAHESWARAN]

# CONTENTS

Foreword

Preface

Page No.

Introduction

	1
1. First Palaeoliths of South India	4
2. Copper Antennae Swords	6
3. Gold Diadems	8
4. Mother Goddess Figurine of Bronze	10
5. Bronze Terminal	12
6. Sieve Cups of Bronze	14
7. Lamp Hanger of Iron	16
8. Mid-rib Sword of Iron	18
9. Burial Urn	20
10. Black ware Pot & Ring Stand	22
11. Russet-coated Pot	24
12. Grinder & Pestle of Terracotta	26
13. Decorated Conch Shell	28
14. Decorated Pottery Lid with Chief Mourner Motif	30
15. Decorated Bronze Bowl	32
16. Hut-shaped Funerary Pot	34
17. Damaru-shaped Ring Stand	36
18. Ram-shaped Sarcophagus	38
19. Four-footed Urn	40
20. Putkuli of the Toda Tribes	42
21. Cross-bow of the Muduga Tribes	44
22. Wild-coir Ladder of the Chenchu Tribes	46
23. Meriah Sacrifice Post	48
24. Boomerangs of Ivory	50
25. Boar, the Panchruli Bhuta Figurines	52
26. Sorcery Figure of the Moplah Muslims	54
27. Giant-shaped Footwear of the Madigas	56
28. Model of Sesha Vahanam	58
29. Model of Kailaya Vahanam	60
30. Model of Purushamruga Vahanam	62
31. Churning of the Milk Ocean	64
32. Aiyandar with Consorts in Terracotta	66
33. Hanuman, An Andhra Leather Puppet	68



34.	Soorpanagha, A Kerala Leather Puppet	70
35.	Elephant & Mahout, A Mysore Leather Puppet	72
36.	Sita Devi, A Malayan Leather Puppet	74
37.	Glove Puppets of Uttar Pradesh	76
38.	String Puppets of Rajasthan	78
39.	Panchamukha Vadyam	80
40.	Kashta Tarang	82
41.	Burmese Sawn	84
42.	Balasaraswati	86
43.	Chain Mail	88
44.	Brass-hilted Short Sword	90
45.	Circular Disc-hilted Long Sword	92
46.	Mace with Buffalo Head Motif	94
47.	Ivory-handled Elephant Goad	96
48.	Glass-handled Elephant Goad	98
49.	Battle Axe of Iron	100
50.	Dagger with Parakeet Head Motif	102
51.	Dagger with Central Glass Body	104
52.	Tiger Claws of Iron	106
53.	Battle Shield of Iron	108
54.	Gauntlet Sword with Elephant Head Motif	110
55.	Spear with Battle Axe Projection	112
56.	Gun Powder Flask of Brass	114
57.	Fire Arm with Gold Inlay Works	116
58.	Swords with Steel Sheath	118
59.	Cannon with Tiger Motifs	120
60.	Model of a Gun Carriage	122
61.	Cage Gallows with Wooden Beam	124
62.	Cage Gallow in Anthropomorphic Frame	126
63.	China Bell as Opium War Trophy	128
64.	Spanish Armoury as Manila War Trophy	130
65.	Remnants of Emden Bomb Shells	132
	Suggested Further Readings	135

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Anthropology : Definition & Scope**

Human beings have always been interested in studying themselves. Therefore, it is futile to speak of a beginning of the study of human beings, viz., 'Anthropology'.

Out of all the disciplines which study various aspects of human beings, Anthropology is the one which comes nearest to being a holistic study of human beings and their works. And its subject-matter is neither limited by 'time' nor by 'space' not even by 'cultural levels of human societies'. In other words, Anthropology studies the human beings, 'Past', 'Present' and also their sub-human & pre-human origins. Thus, it is the study of human beings at all levels of culture, irrespective of time and space.

In general, Anthropology is dichotomized into 'Ethnography' and 'Ethnology'. While the Ethnography is referred to as 'Living Archaeology', the Ethnology is designated as 'Comparative Ethnography'.

Further, Anthropology is divided chiefly into five main branches, namely,  
1. Prehistory/Prehistoric Archaeology/Archaeological Anthropology,



2. Physical Anthropology/Human Biology, 3. Social Anthropology, 4. Cultural Anthropology, and 5. Linguistic Anthropology. At times, both Social Anthropology and Cultural Anthropology are together known as the 'Socio-cultural Anthropology'.

### **Anthropological Exhibits : An Overview:**

The 'Museum Materials' when presented to the general public acquire the elevated status of 'Exhibits' from their early status of being mere 'Museum Objects'. The 'Exhibits of Anthropology', in particular, are mostly the creativities varying in form from the crudest to the finest. And they constitute the media of interaction of any particular kind of phenomenon, technology, environment, in short, the art and culture of any prehistoric, protohistoric, tribal, folk or urban community. And thus, the exhibits of Anthropology vary in range from natural human relics (e.g., skulls & other human material remains) to human-made artefacts (e.g., stone tools, pottery, implements, metallic artefacts, weapons, beads, ornaments).

The basic purpose of presenting exhibits of Anthropology is to make the visiting public aware of the rich natural, cultural, technological and other allied heritage. In other words, the prime purpose of exhibits of Anthropology is to impart knowledge on 'Nature' and 'Culture' of the human societies to the visitors through visual communication.

The adequate techno-sociological data of a culture is presented and communicated to the public through exhibits of Anthropology displayed on a theme, that too in a judicious combination of 'educative' and 'recreative' display.

### **History of the Exhibits of Anthropology at Government Museum, Chennai**

In 1878, Surgeon General G. Bidie, the then Superintendent of Madras State Museum (, presently the Government Museum, Chennai) made 'Ethnology' as a Museum subject, illustrated by prehistoric antiquities and ethnographic materials. And consequently,

the Government Museum, Chennai is marked as the 'Cradle of Anthropology of Indian sub-continent', since the subject-matter of Anthropology was introduced and nurtured exclusively at this Museum by the genuine efforts of Robert Bruce Foote, Alexander Rea, Edgar Thurston, Aiyanaipalli Aiyappan.

The exhibits of Anthropology are displayed at the Museum in its various galleries within the Front Building, viz., Prehistory, Indus Valley Civilization, Physical Anthropology, Ethnology, Folk Religions, Folk Arts, Puppetry, Musical Instruments and Arms which are all refurbished quite recently with the generous grant of Rs.110 lakhs from the Government of Tamilnadu.

In this book, more than five dozen choice exhibits of Anthropology (mostly on display & rarely from reserve collection) are presented with illuminating photographic illustrations and corresponding texts side-by-side for the benefit of people of all walks of life.

## 1. FIRST PALAEOLITHS OF SOUTH INDIA

It was on the 30<sup>th</sup>, May, 1863 that Robert Bruce Foote, the then Officer of Geological Survey of India picked up a hand axe, the first Paleolithic tool from debris on the Brigade Ground at Pallavaram, near Madras (,presently Chennai). Again on the 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1863, R.B.Foote and W.King recovered a cleaver, another palaeolithic tool from the *nullah*-bed of Attirampakkam ( at Thiruvallur District near Chennai). And these two stone tools are described as the first palaeolithic tools, marking the 'Madrasian type of stone tools'.

Foote adduced aptly the name 'Madrasian Hand Axe' to the stone tool and subsequently the stone tool industry associated with these stone tools, the 'Madrasian Hand Axe Industry'. In 1887, Foote presented a detailed account of the discovery of these First Palaeoliths (& other subsequent discoveries of Palaeolithic stone tools in India) as follows: "The former existence of old stone tools in South India was unknown till 1863 when I had the good fortune to discover the first chipped stone tool in a laterite gravel at Pallavaram, a few miles south of Madras". Foote claimed further that his discovery "really started prehistoric research in this country". Hence, Foote is right in his observations that "..... I have only claimed priority for my finds in South India", as "excepting a doubtful fragment of a stone implement found by Mr. Theobald (in 1861-62) of the Geological Survey of India in the Gangetic alluvium near the mouth of Soan no traces of chipped stone implements had previously been discovered in India".

Foote declared his first findings and made vigorous search for stone tools, published accounts on them and in fact, he introduced the first scientific study of the stone tools in India, fetching him the title, "the Father of Indian Prehistoric Archaeology".





## 2. COPPER ANTENNAE SWORDS

Of the copper-hoarded implements of Protohistoric Period, the copper antennae swords are construed as a unique kind of artefacts, as their hilts bifurcate like the antennae of an insect (in contradistinction to the single and straight hilt of ordinary swords).

The salient features of copper antennae swords unearthed from Coimbatore (, the actual site being Kuppuchipudur stone quarry-nearby Perumalswamykaradu in the Anamalai region of Pollachi taluk, Coimbatore district, Tamilnadu) are enlisted below:

- The antennae portion of hilt of these swords is not tapering at the distal end.
- The blade of these swords is not so tapering at the distal end.
- Some of these swords are unique in shape, with a remarkable constriction at the body either in centre or in penultimate distal end.
- Further, some of these swords are found to exhibit a prominent mid rib.

A hoard of copper antennae swords (8 in Nos.) were first reported in the Indian sub-continent from Gangetic basin. Later, in 1982 a single copper antennae sword was identified as a treasure-trove find from Shavinipatti village, near Minnalkudi in the Tirupathur taluk of Sivagangai district in Tamilnadu. During 2000, another hoard of similar antennae swords (8 in Nos.) was received through treasure trove from Appukkal village near Vellore, Tamilnadu. Still later in 2001, yet another hoard of copper antennae swords (10 in Nos.) was unearthed from Coimbatore as treasure-trove find. And all these finds provide a chance of mapping the possible route of copper antennae swords in South India (inclusive of the Kallur finds of Raichur district in Karnataka).

The findings of copper antennae swords suggest that there arises a sheer necessity to rewrite the protohistory of South India, as the 'Indian Copper Antennae Swords' are crafted in single mould (unlike the 'Copper Antennae Swords attested from the Koban region of Upper Iran' which exhibit appendage hilt and handle portions as separate pieces are appended only at a later stage).





### **3. GOLD DIADEMS**

The Megalithic site of Adichanallur in Tamilnadu has yielded gold diadems (13 Nos.) of more or less oval shaped, paper thin, flat items with embossed dots running as venation of a leaf. These gold diadems are provided mostly with ribbon-like extensions on both their sides with minute holes so as to tie them with thread (of hair follicle diameter) over the forehead of the deceased person.

The excavations at Adichanallur by A. Rea during 1799-1904 have exposed these unique items of jewellery, as associated finds along with the main finds of burial urn.

While in other parts of Tamilnadu such gold diadems are tied over the forehead of brides and grooms by their respective affinals during the marriage ceremony, in Tirunelveli they are observed to be tied to the forehead of deceased persons by the female kins like daughters-in-law, grand daughters at the pre-funerary rite. It would not be out of context to ponder over the statuette of priest-king from Indus Valley Civilization that depicts a diadem worn around its forehead. From such past and contemporary cultural practices, it is presumed that the diadems were worn by people as a mark of status.

Prevalence of gold diadems at Adichanallur gives the indication that the Megalithic people of that region remained as exponents of metallurgy in gold as well, apart from dealing with iron and bronze alloy in their day-to-day life.



#### 4. MOTHER GODDESS FIGURINE OF BRONZE

This exhibit, the mother goddess figurine, although is a stray find unearthed from the excavations of Adichanallur during 1900s, its significance could not be brushed aside as it forms the first metal image of South India. This *cire perdue* (solid cast) figurine depicts the features such as prominent breasts, wide hip, a characteristic waist girdle and a uniquely shaped headgear. Of these features, wide hip and prominent breasts make us to presume that this figurine should be of a mother goddess.

While fashioning of the burial urn in elongated uterus shape with umbilical chord design at its neck portion tempts us to construe a matriarchal social structure to the Megalithic people of Adichanallur, this stray find of mother goddess figurine from the same site reiterates that this hypothesis holds good.

Earlier, this figurine of bronze was assigned to the date of 7<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E. However, we have to re-assign its date as that of 3750 B.C.E. to 1450 B.C.E., based on the recent Optimal Simulation Luminescence (OSL) Dating of potsherds from Adichanallur. If it is so, then this mother goddess figurine of bronze from Adichanallur could be claimed as the first metal image of pre-partitioned India, pushing aside the figurine of the so-called 'Dancing Girl' of Indus Valley Civilization.





## **5. BRONZE TERMINAL**

This antiquity of bronze unearthed from the Megalithic Adichanallur is a craftifact of composite forms, comprising of a goblet at the base over which a central columnar structure on a circular disc stands. A set of animal figurines on radiating arms get fixed from that columnar structure while a shallow bowl is placed on its top. A sieve cup is put over the shallow bowl to fumigate the frankincense. The resultant fumes are made to spread over the chamber through the perforations made in concentric circles on the body of paper thin sieve cup.

The figurines embellishing such bronze terminal may be of tigers, rams, buffaloes, cocks, floral buds.

This ornate decorative art belonging to the Megalithic period stands as a testimony to the metallurgical skills of people of Adichanallur during yesteryears.

Non-destructive analysis has revealed that the Megalithic bronze antiquities of Adichanallur were reinforced by excessive addition of arsenic, as evidenced in the Harappan Civilization.



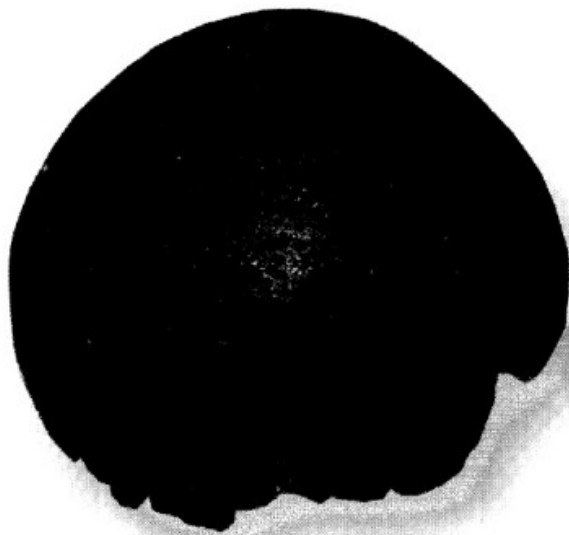


## **6. SIEVE CUPS OF BRONZE**

An array of sieve cups in bronze was unearthed from the Megalithic Adichanallur by A.Rea during 1799-1904. And these sieve cups of bronze fabricated into paper-thin thickness are globular in shape at the bottom and provided with wide opening at the proximity, without any distinct rim or projection. These sieve cups exhibit perforated concentric circles as their self emerging designs.

Although these sieve cups of bronze are commonly identified as 'strainers' they could have been used as 'frankincense chambers' over the bronze terminal, so as to release the fragrant fumes slowly, in a controlled manner.

The sieve cups of bronze unearthed from Adichanallur reveal that the Sangam Age Tamils of that region have excelled in metallurgical skills of fabricating bronze cups in paper-thin thickness and technological skills of perforating such thin surface with concentric circles.

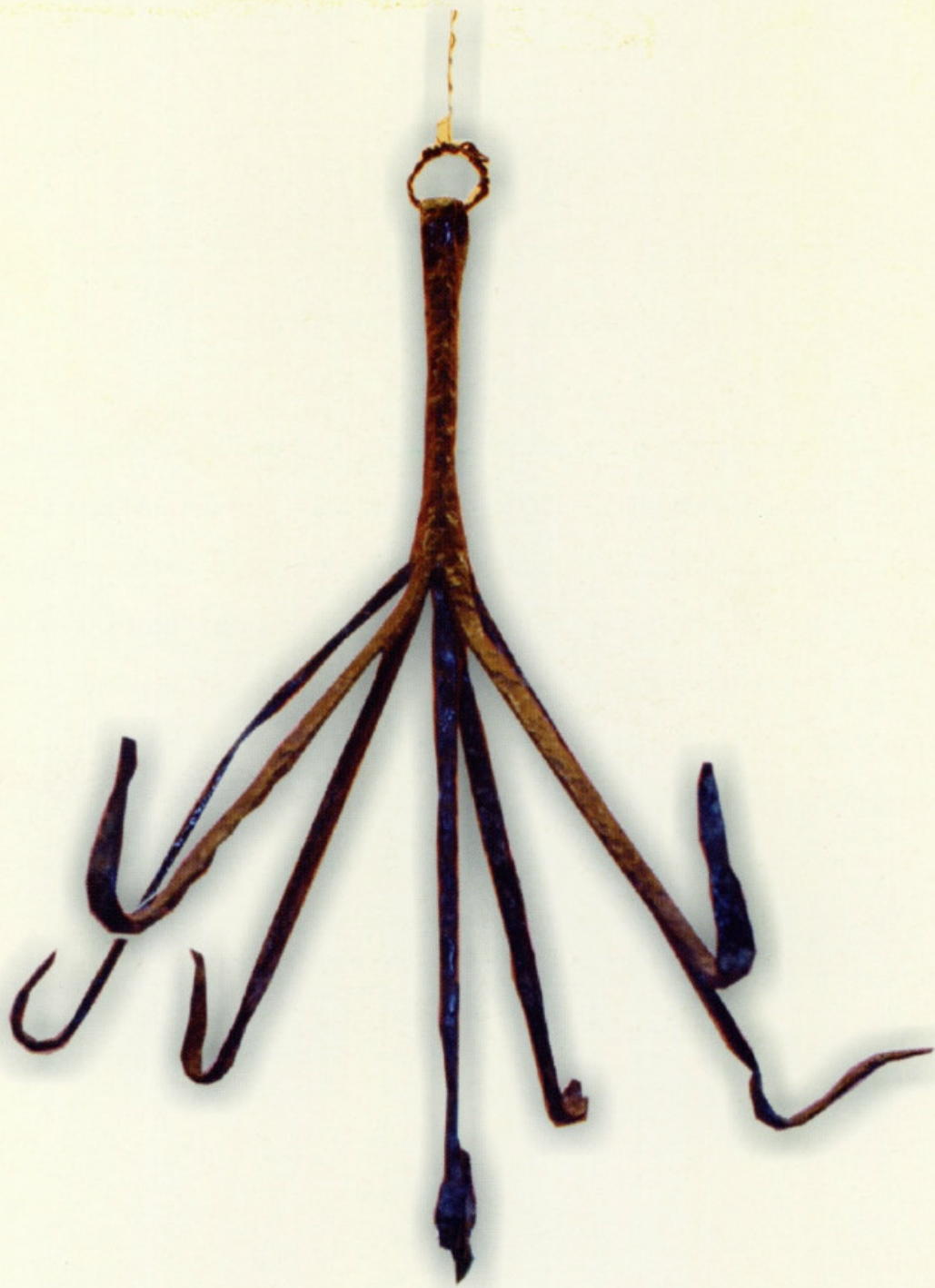


## **7. LAMP HANGER OF IRON**

The metallic antiquities unearthed from Megalithic Adichanallur comprise mostly iron implements, apart from bronze artefacts in lesser incidence and gold objects in less numbers. The iron implements of Adichanallur could be grouped into three distinct categories, viz., agricultural implements, household appliances and weapons of warfare.

Lamp hanger is one of the unique household appliances of iron excavated from Adichanallur. It is a vertical rod that ends in multi-prongs. The end of each such prong is fashioned into a slightly bent loop wherein iron lamp is suspended as hanging structure. The vertical rod of lamp hanger is provided with a hole within the loop for hanging down over a point. The series of iron lamps when get suspended from the lamp hanger and lit reveal light source in lump sum. Hence, this iron lamp hanger of Adichanallur could be designated as the 'chandelier of yesteryears'.

The excess quantity of carbon added in the metallurgical process of ironsmithy has reinforced the strength of iron.



## **8. MID-RIB SWORD OF IRON**

A set of iron implements excavated from the Megalithic Adichanallur are identified as weapons of warfare. Of those weapons, a few swords are found to bear a central projection throughout their length. And these special type of swords are known as 'mid-rib-swords', as their mid-projection reminds us of the mid-rib of leaflet of coconut.

Excessive addition of carbon while smelting iron in the metallurgical process of ironsmithy has reinforced primarily the strength of Adichanallur iron. The mid-rib projection further reiterated the firmness of such mid-rib sword.

The length and the massiveness of mid-rib swords indirectly convey that their users (, viz., the people of Megalithic Adichanallur) might have possessed robust body to handle them effectively and effortlessly as well.





## 9. BURIAL URN

The excavations carried out at Adichanallur during 1799-1904 have yielded an array of megalithic grave goods comprising pottery, iron implements, bronze artefacts and a few items of gold. Of the various pottery items unearthed from Megalithic graves of Adichanallur, the mega-sized pyriform burial urns of terracotta are construed as the main finds of excavation. It is conjectured that the Megalithic people believed that the spirit of deceased person enters mother's womb and get reincarnated as a new human being. And here, the burial urn is conceived as the enlarged uterus, owing to its oval shape. The umbilical chord design observed on neck portion of such burial urn reiterates the fact that it was construed as the enlarged uterus.

A large conical bowl is used as the lid to cover and protect the contents of the burial urn. At times, two such lids (, one kept over the other) are also observed over the wide mouth of burial urn.

Prestigious goods such as semi-precious stones, gold diadems are identified within the burial urn, apart from primary interred bone relics such as skull, femur.

Unlike, the varied types of associated pottery finds in black & red ware, black ware, red ware, russet-coated ware, the burial urns occur as mere buff ware. Interestingly, the excavations that were carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (during 2004-2005) have yielded a number of burial urns in black & red ware as well. Normally, graffiti are identified only on the associated pottery. Rarely, graffiti are also observed on the neck portion of burial urn.





## **10. BLACK WARE POT & RING STAND**

Generally, the Megalithic period has in its stock varied types of pottery such as black & red ware, black ware, red ware, russet-coated ware, apart from buff ware. While the inverted firing has yielded black & red ware, the polished earthen ware produced certain special types of pottery, namely, black ware, red ware and russet-coated ware.

The black ware pot with ring stand in black ware is an attractive ensemblage of antiquities unearthed from Adichanallur. The typical black ware pot is more or less spherical with a very narrow neck with corresponding narrow mouth. Its associated ring stand in black ware is characteristically tall in stature with very small base both on top and bottom.





## **11. RUSSET-COATED POT**

The Megalithic antiquities of earthen ware that were unearthed from Adichanallur are of several types, inclusive of the typical black & red ware, apart from certain special types of polished pottery, such as black ware, red ware and russet-coated ware. While the category of red ware comprises pottery with red slip, the russet-coated ware represent a special variety of Megalithic Pottery with polished redness throughout the body. Such russet-coated ware bear usually white decorative lines mostly in wavy pattern created by thin filaments of clay appliquéd over the exterior of pottery before firing and removed afterwards. At times, these decorations were done in the interior of the russet-coated ware as well.

This particular exhibit of russet-coated ware is a pot with characteristic wavy pattern of line over its exterior and thus attracts the visitors.





## **12. GRINDER & PESTLE OF TERRACOTTA**

The grave goods unearthed from Megalithic burial sites of Adichanallur consist chiefly of iron implements and terracotta objects of varied types, apart from antiquities of lesser incidences in bronze and gold. The terracotta items of Megalithic burials vary from pottery to household appliances. Altogether, two pairs of grinder & pestle in terracotta were excavated from Adichanallur.

Of the two sets of grinder & pestle of terracotta, this particular pair remains intact, without any damage. The weight and the strength of this grinder & pestle stand as a testimony to the technological skills of par excellence possessed by the Sangam Age Tamils in fabricating stone-like solid and heavy artefacts, even in the terracotta medium. Appearance of slight, shallow depression at the centre of grinder and pestle (due to wear & tear) suggests that this set of household appliance might have been utilized constantly. The platform of the grinder rests on leg-like extensions of its body.







### **13. DECORATED CONCH SHELL**

The grave goods acquired from Perumbair, a Megalithic site of Northern Tamilnadu excavated and documented by A.Rea have also yielded a number of unique items, apart from regular items of antiquity such as pottery, iron implements. One such unique item unearthed from the Perumbair Megalithic burials is a decorated conch shell. This conch shell bears graphic representations of geometric patterns comprising concentric circles, lines engraved on its bulbous body.

It is presumed that these embellishments in the form of engravings might have been created over the conch to convey some mystic information and or tantric meaning. And consequently, it may be regarded as an object of ritual paraphernalia.



## **14. DECORATED POTTERY LID WITH CHIEF MOURNER MOTIF**

The grave goods of Megalithic Nilgiris differ considerably with the corresponding antiquities unearthed from other sites in several aspects. For instance, the burial urns of Megalithic Nilgiris are tiered pottery of grotesque shape covered over with a decorated pottery lid bearing a motif of zoomorphic or anthropomorphic (or rarely phytomorphic) form atop it.

One such decorated pottery lid shows a motif of a seated man resting his left hand over his head and the right hand over hip. This is interpreted as that of the chief mourner bereaved by the loss of deceased person who happens to be his close relative.

The figurine of chief mourner is embellished with designs created by dots over the body with the help of porcupine quills-marking costumes and ornaments. On the top of lid, the figurine of chief mourner is fixed as an appliqué icon, converting the simple lid into a decorated one.

The physiognomic features of this motif of chief mourner help us to presume and thereby reconstruct the physical features of people of those yesteryears.







## **15. DECORATED BRONZE BOWL**

In response to the call letter of authorities of Indian Museum, Calcutta (presently Kolkata), J.W.Brecks, the first District Collector of Nilgiris, in 1870s, arranged for unearthing about 4 dozen megalithic burial sites in and around the Nilgiris. His efforts have yielded a variety of Megalithic antiquities ranging from bronze to ceramics.

Of all the bronze items excavated from the Nilgiris, a set of bronze bowls excelled others in metallic texture, fabrication techniques and ultimately decorative embellishments. Of these, this particular decorated bronze bowl differs from the rest of the bronze bowls excavated from the Nilgiris by its unique shape (unlike the regular, circular shape) and self-emerged, overt floral designs crafted out of rutting technique (unlike the usual, simple designs created by rutting).

This decorated bronze bowl resembles that of the sacred ash receptacle of Contemporary period. The floral designs of this bowl which were fabricated by the technique of rutting in the background of patination appear as golden embellishments and thereby this decorated bronze bowl remains as a visual treat to the onlookers.



## **16. HUT-SHAPED FUNERARY POT**

The Prehistory Gallery of Government Museum, Chennai showcases Megalithic antiquities acquired from various burial sites in and around the erstwhile Madras Presidency. Of the various grave goods acquired from Coimbatore, a hut-shaped funerary pot attracts the visiting public a lot due to its unique shape. The spirit of deceased person is believed to reach another abode from this world to the other world, in other words, a new house. Consequently, the associated funerary pot is fashioned probably in the shape of a small hut. And this entire hut-shaped funerary pot was given away with a red wash.

A tiny rectangular opening is shown in the hut-shaped funerary pot, probably as an entry point. This antiquity is found to rest over a small columnar structure, making it some what taller in appearance.







## **17. DAMARU-SHAPED RING STAND**

The chief grave goods acquired from Megalithic burial sites are ceramics, comprising terracotta vessels and their respective ring stands. Normally, the ring stands are identified as short and stumpy structures. And sometimes, they are observed to be in peculiar size and shape as well. One such ring stand obtained from Pudukottai is a 'damaru-shaped' antiquity in black ware.

This unique ring stand of black ware, fashioned in the shape of a 'damaru' (Tamil 'udukkai') is unusually thick in diameter, big in size and high in stature, unlike other usual ring stands.

The ring stands are employed usually to bear and highlight the pots kept over them. According to Tmt. Pupal Jayakar, the noted Art Historian (Founder of INTACH), the ring stands are symbolic representations of male forms while the pots are their female counterparts.



## **18. RAM-SHAPED SARCOPHAGUS**

The megalithic burial potteries are dichotomized chiefly into 'burial urns' and 'sarcophagi'. While the former is identified as enlarged uterus-shaped structure, the latter is observed in the shape of a bath tub provided with pair of legs (whose number varies depending upon the size of sarcophagi).

Sankavaram, a tiny village located in the Guntur taluk of Andhra Pradesh has revealed a unique ram-shaped sarcophagus while digging the earth therein for laying foundation for a church.

This Ram-shaped Sarcophagus is nothing but a regular sarcophagus covered in addition by two plates of terracotta to make the body of ram and a detachable solid head of ram, completing the image of a full-fledged ram. Interestingly, 4 pairs of legs are provided to its base. And each pair of legs bears a conspicuous hole for entry and exit of air, accelerating the exhumation process.

As the Megalithic people believed that the spirit of deceased person is in need of a vehicle to transport it from this world to the other, they might have fashioned the sarcophagus in the shape of a ram. Further, ram is construed as the vehicle (Vaahana) of Agni, the god of fire who is believed to purify the departed soul so as to make it fit for reincarnation.







## **19. FOUR-FOOTED URN**

The associated pottery finds of Megalithic burial sites also showcase urns of relatively smaller dimension, with foot (, mostly 4 but rarely 3 or 5) as teat-like projections at their bottom. And such urns are designated as 'Footed Urns'. As these footed urns bear normally 4 projections, they are known as 'Four-footed Urns'. Such footed urns were identified first at Malabar and consequently referred to as 'Malabar Footed Urns'. And the teat-like projections help the urns to get impregnated with the chance soil in a normal hilly terrain. As these footed urns were later on identified from sites other than Malabar, the erstwhile name, 'Malabar Footed Urns' was replaced subsequently as 'Footed Urns'.

This four-footed urn unearthed from the Malabar region of Kerala is noticed to bear graphic representations of dots within rectangular blocks. And these graphic art expressions are believed to be associated with the cultural practices connected with funerary rites.



## 20. PUTKULI OF THE TODA TRIBES

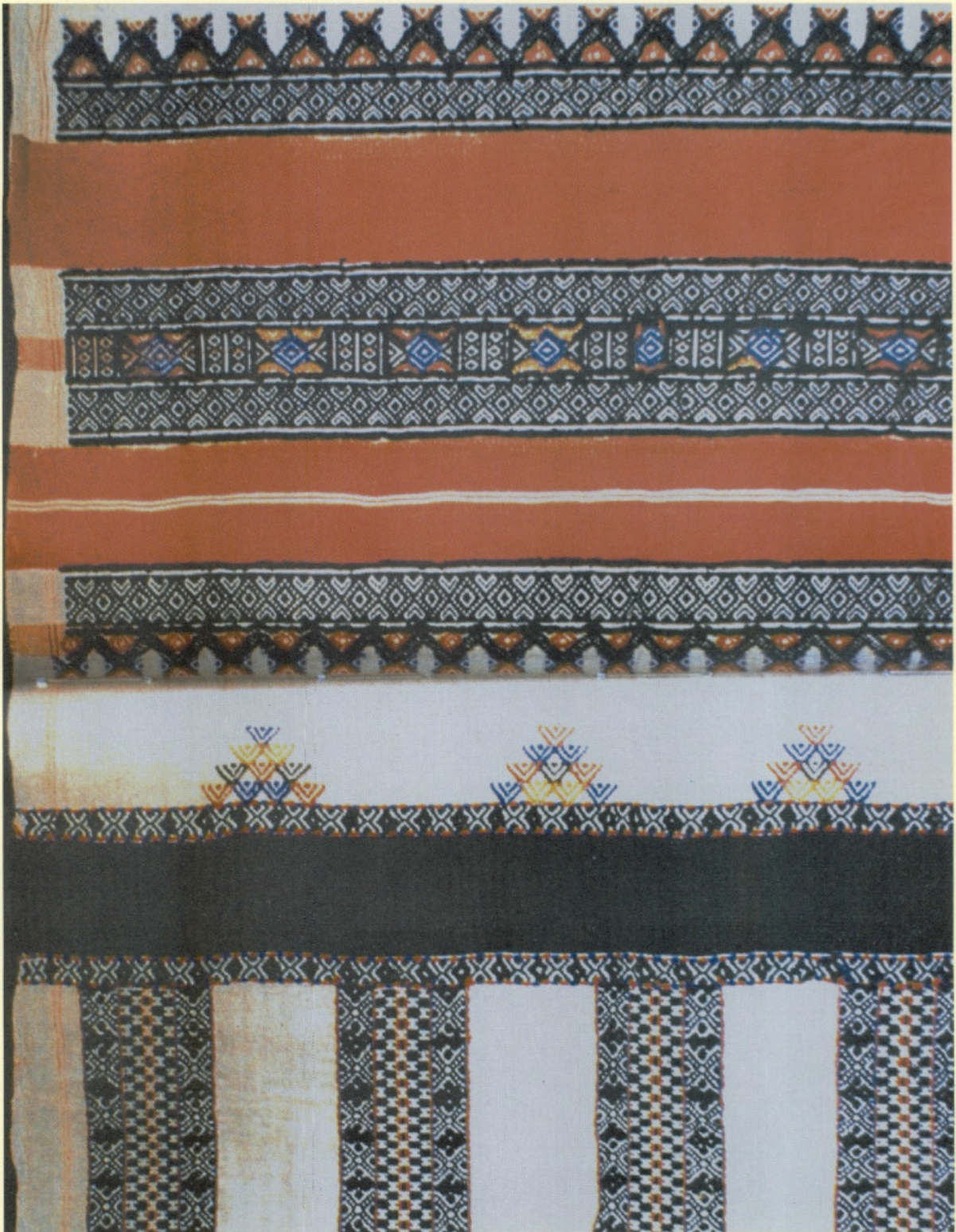
The embroidered textile of Toda tribes of the Nilgiris used as a mantle is designated as *putkuli*. The *putkuli* is made of coarse, unbleached, white, handloom cloth of approximately 76.3 x 259.3 cm consisting of two lengths (each length consisting of two pieces joined longitudinally) of cloth sewn together at the edges to form a garment of double thickness.

A typical *putkuli* is embroidered in black and red with woolen threads. The motif referred to as *pukoar* is laid out in between and away from the strips of black and red of the hand woven cloth. As the pattern of embroidery is executed by the combined methods of darning and embroidery, (by counting the gaps of threads), the resultant design emerges as geometric forms to casual look. When embroidery is done along a strip, naturalistic designs appear as geometric patterns on the reverse of the shawl as well. *Putkuli*, the embroidered textile of Toda tribes of the Nilgiris reveal, in short, a highly developed aesthetic sense.

The *putkuli* is worn by the Toda people of all ages, viz., men, women, boys, girls. The Todas wear it in such a way that it covers their chest, right arm and shoulders, leaving the left arm free. As a gesticulation of reverence during certain socio-cultural and religious observances, the Todas re-arrange their *putkuli*.

The best and the most elaborately worked out specimens of *putkuli* are used by important persons at festive gatherings and funerals. And the elderly Todas are observed to be possessing intricately designed *putkuli* to be draped over their bodies as shroud.







## **21. CROSS-BOW OF THE MUDUGA TRIBES**

The Mudugas, one of the hunting-gathering tribes inhabiting Tamilnadu and Kerala, are identified with a peculiar type of cross-bow fashioned in the shape of a gun with trigger. Hence, it is also designated as the 'Trigger Bow'. The trigger of gun portion of this hunting tool is set in such a way so as to propel the arrow with sharp dart. A groove fabricated on the point of release of trigger organizes the trajectory of arrow shot therein. The inside of dome portion of bow is reinforced with plates of bamboo or wood in order to withstand the tensile weapon intact even while it is subjected to effective maneuvering.

The Muduga tribes have fashioned this simple but sophisticated hunting implement, by combining a traditional bow with shock-absorbing plates as construed and devised from that of the shock-absorbing plates of steel in a lorry of contemporary period, of course incorporating the triggering gun of medieval age.



## **22. WILD-COIR LADDER OF THE CHENCHU TRIBES**

The Chenchu tribes inhabiting Nallamalai range of Andhra Pradesh engage themselves in honey collection approaching even the inaccessible cliffs and rock crevices, by means of indigenously crafted wild-coir ladder. The wild-coir ladder is rolled usually into a circular fashion while not in use.

It is customary that the brother-in-law of the honey collector has to catch hold of such wild-coir ladder during the operation of honey collection. In case of any untoward incidence, it becomes obligatory on the part of brother-in-law concerned to take care of the entire family of his sister. The social cohesiveness in economic activity is revealed through observance of these sorts of cultural practices.

This exhibit remains as an excellent example revealing the skills of Chenchus in fibre-crafting. In the absence of wild coir and or fibres, the Chenchus are found to be engaged in crafting such indigenous ladders with the help of rattan as well.







### 23. MERIAH SACRIFICE POST

This is the only meriah sacrifice post now in existence, reminiscent of human sacrifice observed by the Khond tribes of the erstwhile Ganjam tract of Madras Presidency. This exhibit was acquired from Balliguda of the then Ganjam District (presently the Baudh-Khondmal/Phulbani District) of Orissa. It was brought by Colonel Pickance, the then Assistant Superintendent of Police. The Khond tribes who were brought to Madras in 1906 (during the visit of Prince & Princess of Wales), it is reported, became widely excited when they came across this sacrifice post, being exhibited at the State Museum of Madras.

The human sacrifice was offered to their earth deity (*thada penu*) by the Khond tribes in order to ensure bumper yield of turmeric cultivation. The Khonds believe that turmeric could not have deep red colour without shedding of blood through the meriah sacrifice.

The meriah sacrifice post looks like effigy of an elephant carved rudely in wood, fixed on the top of a stout post, on which it is made to revolve. The intended victim, the *meriah* (having intoxicated with country brew *mahua* liquor) is fastened to the portion of wood that resembles the proboscis of an elephant. Amidst shouts and yells of the excited multitude of Khonds gathered there, the horizontal part of post is whirled round rapidly. At a given signal by the officiating priest, the crowd rushes in, seize the victim and cut his flesh with their knives.

The last recorded meriah sacrifice occurred in 1852. During 1880 two persons were convicted of attempting to perform meriah sacrifice near Ambadola in Bissamkatak (of Koraput District, Orissa).



## 24. BOOMERANGS OF IVORY

Boomerang,(the flattened, angled, curved clubs) designed primarily for throwing are probably the most primitive of all weapons of mankind. They are called *valari* or *valai thadi* or *valai thadik kambu* in local parlance among the people of Southern Tamilnadu.

The Government Museum, Chennai is in possession of such indigenous boomerangs acquired through transfer from the Tanjore Armoury & the Pudukkottai Museum and through purchase from one Mr. Naidu of Sivakasi. Of them, these two boomerangs of ivory were acquired from the Tanjore Armoury through transfer.

These boomerangs of ivory are short weapons of crescent shape, one end being heavier than the other. And their outer edge is relatively sharper than their corresponding inner edges. While their narrow proximal end is provided with a more or less globular knob, their broad, distal end is embellished with lacquer work.

Absence of hyperbolic curves and presence of convex contours on, above and below without any twist make these boomerangs into non-returnable ones.

Their source of acquisition gives an indication that they were used definitely as weapons of warfare in the Tanjore region during the Maratha Period.







## 25. BOAR, THE PANCHRULI BHUTA FIGURINES

The South Canara District of Karnataka has a 'Bhuta Shrine' wherein an array of bhuta figurines of brass are deposited regularly by the devotees due to kow fulfilling. Such bhuta figurines of votive offering are referred to as *panchruli*, in the local parlance.

The *panchruli* bhuta figurines are either zoomorphic or mounted anthropomorphic or theriomorphic forms. Wild boar as zoomorphic form (both as figurines & as head) and a female deity seated on the back of a wild boar are available in the collection of Government Museum, Chennai (,excepting the theriomorphic form). Deification of wild animal (zoomorphic), subjugation of wild animals (anthropomorphic form, mounted on wild game) and half-beast & half human being (theriomorphic) reveal a sort of evolutionary sequence perceptible within the *panchruli* bhuta figurines.

The practice of casting brass figurines to present them as votive offerings in the bhuta shrine fosters and thereby sustains the folk craft tradition of people of South Canara. The physiognomic features of these *panchruli* figurines are realistic to the core.



## 26. SORCERY FIGURE OF THE MOPLAH MUSLIMS

This exhibit which depicts the sorcery figure of a life-size female image carved out of the wood of *Alstonia scholaris* remains as the testimony to the witchcraft practised by the *Moplah* Muslims of Malabar, Kerala State. This figure which gets washed ashore at Calicut was acquired to the Museum during 1903.

The Feet of this figure are getting inverted and turned backwards. Interestingly, the image is shown with folded hands-as if appealing for mercy. Long nails had been driven in all over the head, body & limbs and a large square hole cut out above the navel. Further more, inscriptions in Arabic Characters (in pencil) were found scribbled over its entire body.

One of the methods of witchcraft by *Moplah* Muslims is to make a wooden figure to represent the enemy, drive nails into all the vital parts and later on throw it into sea, after curses in due form. By a coincidence, it is reported, the corpse of a person was washed ashore as well close to this sorcery figure.





## **27. GIANT-SIZED FOOTWEAR OF THE MADIGAS**

This pair of giant-sized footwear was crafted by the Madigas of Andhra Pradesh and presented as votive offerings to the Lord Balaji of Tirumala Hills. As the devotees envisage '*Vishwarupa*' of their beloved gods and goddesses, accordingly they could think only giant-sized footwear as appropriate to the feet of their gods and goddesses.

Although this set of giant-sized footwear is construed as a pair, in reality it is not so. The visitors could realize this fact if they happened to look at both these footwear closely. Yes..... both the footwears differ with one another in design and fabrication, excepting the imbibed red colour cloth and the gold colour filament. To cope with the mega-size, a number of bits of leather are sewn together to fabricate even a small portion of the footwear.

This giant-sized- footwear was gifted to the Museum (through bequest) by the authorities of Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanam.







## 28. MODEL OF SESA VAHANAM

'*Vahanam*' (, meaning “vehicle”) constitutes one of the ritual objects identified within the domain of ritual organization. The processional deities (*Utsava murti*) are mounted usually over *vahana* of one kind or other during the religious processions. Hinduism sports several such *vahanas*. Of these, *Sesha Vahanam* (wherein *Adishesha*, the snake which forms the bed for Lord Vishnu the *Anantasayanamurti* in the Milk Ocean of *Vaikunda*) is one of the favourite vehicles associated with Lord Vishnu.

The exhibit depicts an ornate model of *Sesha Vahanam* carved out of rose wood. Here, *Kurma*, the turtle (,one of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu) is shown at its base, over which *Adhishesha*, the multi-hooded cobra is shown.

This model of *Sesha Vahanam* exemplifies the wood carving skills of the Tamils.



## 29. MODEL OF KAILAYA VAHANAM

This multi-chrome model of *Kailaya Vahanam* is identified with the Mount *Kailash* which is shouldered by *Ravana*, the anti-hero of the epic *Ramayan*. The mythology portrays that once *Ravana* tried to lift the Mount *Kailash* which was prevented by Lord Siva simply by a push of his great toe. As *Ravana* get caught beneath the Mount *Kailash*, he tried in vain to get released. In a final attempt, *Ravana* severed one of his ten heads and with that prepared a string instrument with his own nerves as the requisite strings. As *Ravana* started to play this musical instrument, Lord Siva get moved by the meticulous musical notes and released his great toe. This entire mythological episode gets reflected through this model of *Kailaya Vahanam*.

In this exhibit, *Ravana* is shown in the fore-front while the Mount *Kailash* is portrayed in the background. And Lord Siva is seated usually over this vehicle during the temple processions.





### 30. MODEL OF PURUSHAMRUGA VAHANAM

Temple vahanas bearing theriomorphic forms are witnessed in the Hindu temples. A peculiar theriomorphic form depicted by a male human form, *purusha* with the body of an animal, *mruga* constitutes the *Purushamruga* (i.e., half male and half animal). It is one of the temple vahanas observed within the Hindu religious paraphernalia.

This exhibit which showcases the model of *purushamruga vahana* contains a multi-colour figurine of *purushamruga* with a rectangular platform on which Lord Siva is made seated. In this figure, the human part with fingers and finger nails convey clearly that the mysterious animal body gets completed with a male human head and fore limbs.







### 31. CHURNING OF THE MILK OCEAN

This exhibit in multichrome wash is an ensemblage of Kondapalli toys, comprising the Mount *Meru* (as the churning stick), the snake *Vasuki* (as the churning thread), the turtle incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the *Kurma* (as the fulcrum) with one row of *Suras* (, the celestial beings) and another row of *Asuras* (, the Rakshas) and each side trying to churn the Milk Ocean in their efforts of obtaining *Amruth* (, the Ambrosia - the elixir) and the physical traits (proportionate body parts Vs. disproportionate body parts) respectively portraying the contrasts of *Suras* and *Asuras*.



### 32. AIYANAR WITH CONSORTS IN TERRACOTTA

The Government Museum, Chennai is in possession of a set of terracottas from Thanjavur depicting the images of various folk deities. The image of *Aiyanar* with his consorts *Puranai* and *Pushkalai* flanking him in an ensemblage form is rated as the best of all those Thanjavur terracottas.

The dull red colour of the terracotta gives an appealing aesthetics and form the core of visual treat to the onlookers. Embellishment in the form of appliqués and dots & lines drawn in single style to represent ornaments, etc., add beauty to this image of folk deity.





### 33. HANUMAN, AN ANDHRA LEATHER PUPPET

Of all the leather puppets of South India, the Andhra leather puppets are considered to be more colourful, having been painted with vegetable pigments. And this leather puppet from Andhra depicts *Hanuman* (, the theriomorphic form of half human & half monkey) leaping from Southern end of Tamilnadu to Sri Lanka, in search of *Seetha*, the spouse of *Rama* (of *Ramayan*).

Both the hominid and the pithecoïd features are shown meticulously in this Andhra leather puppet.

This particular exhibit was acquired through purchase from the Handicrafts Board, Anna Salai, Chennai.







### 34. SOORPANAGHA, A KERALA LEATHER PUPPET

Unlike the leather puppets of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu, the Kerala leather puppets are devoid of colours. And this Kerala leather puppet depicts *Soorpanagha* (, the sister of *Ravana*, a female titan, multilated by *Rama* and *Lakshmana* of epic *Ramayan*. Although this leather puppet is non-coloured one, its self-embellishments (through perforations and obvious gaps) make it a presentable shadow puppet through silhouette image produced by screening its shadow through back-lit lighting.

Such Kerala leather puppets differ from that of the leather puppets of other Southern States in one more aspect as well. That is, the various body parts of leather puppets are articulated not as jointed units but as a single contoured image and maneured by holding its supporting stick.

This leather puppet depicting *Soorpanagha* was one among the 34 specimens purchased from the Sub-Magistrate of Palghat, Kerala State.



### **35. ELEPHANT & MAHOUT, A MYSORE LEATHER PUPPET**

This multi-coloured leather puppet of Mysore (, Karnataka) depicts a mahout riding over the back of an elephant.

On illumination through back-lit lighting, this coloured leather puppet will project a colourful silhouette image on the screen. The marionette gives required articulated gestures by moving the various body parts that were joined together through manipulating the stick(s) attached to the centre of leather puppet.

This exhibit was one of the 10 Mysore leather puppets purchased from Thiru Kodur Ramamurti, a folk artist of Andhra origin who resided at the Kilpauk area of Chennai.





### **36. SITA DEVI, A MALAYAN LEATHER PUPPET**

The leather puppetry of South India was believed to have spread to various South East Asian countries such as Malaysia, Java, Sumatra, Bali. The characters of the leather puppetry are drawn mostly from Indian epics, namely, *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*.

The exhibit, *Sita Devi* is one of the 14 leather puppets of multi-chrome nature of Malayan type acquired by exchange from Shri H.A.Mubin Sheppard, Director of Museums, Federation of Malaya, in 1963.

The physiognomic features of this leather puppet depict vividly the pan-South East Asian characters, especially the 'Malayan'. For instance, the characteristic hair style, costume and slender limbs, apart from ornaments of embellishment mark clearly the South East Asian features and thereby it departs totally with that of the South Indian leather puppets from Andhra, Kerala, Mysore and Tamilnadu.







### **37. GLOVE PUPPETS OF UTTAR PRADESH**

These two items of Uttar Pradesh glove puppets depict the heroine of folk theatre and that of a social worker, with moveable eyes and lips. While the former is classified as a pure glove puppet, the latter is attributed to be a marionette with glove and string in combination. As the name indicates, these puppets are marionetted by the puppeteers by holding them within their hands as gloves.

The costumes of these glove marionettes show clearly the characteristic features of people of Uttar Pradesh.

The two exhibits were acquired for the Museum through purchase from Smt. Seetha Lakshmi, a puppeteer of Chennai.



### **38. STRING PUPPETS OF RAJASTHAN**

This pair of exhibits of Rajasthani string puppets depicts Amer Singh, the Rajasthan cult hero and the washer woman.

Here, Amer Singh is shown in full costume of a Rajasthani warrior. He brandishes a characteristic Rajasthani sword, wearing a typical turban.

The colourful depiction of these two Rajasthani marionettes is definitely forming a visual treat to the beholding eyes of Museum visitors.

These two Rajasthani string puppets were acquired for the Museum through purchase from Thiru V. Ramamurthy of the Central Leather Research Laboratory, Chennai.





### 39. PANCHAMUKHA VADYAM

A parchment of cow covered over the mouth of a pot emerged as a typical percussion instrument and named accordingly as the '*Kuda Muzhaa*' (Lit. "Pot Drum"). The pot drum with five faces which are performed in select saivite temples of the Cauvery Delta region of Central Tamilnadu was designated as '*Aimukha Kuda Muzhaa*' (Lit. "Five-faced Pot Drum"). Due to the impact of Sanskrit in religious domain, this highly evolved pot drum of five faces is popularly designated as the '*Panchamukha Vadyam*' (Lit. "Five-faced (musical) instrument"), in due course.

The four out of the five faces of the instrument in equi-diameter are placed at a slightly obtuse angle towards the four cardinal directions, viz. east, west, north and south. While its straight, fifth face (, namely, *vamadeyam*) of relatively broader diameter is placed at the centre of other four faces. A single performer beats all the five faces alternately with both hands so as to emanate a rhythmic music.

The authorities of Thyagarajaswamy temple of Thiruvavur were kind enough to gift this percussion instrument of uniqueness to the Museum a long time ago, since they had one more akin instrument in their stock.

Due to its heavy body of bronze (, weighing a ton, approximately), the *Panchamukha Vadyam* is transported usually from its storage to the front of presiding deity and back, by means of a specially designed manual push cart known locally as the '*Panchamukha Vadya Vandi*.'





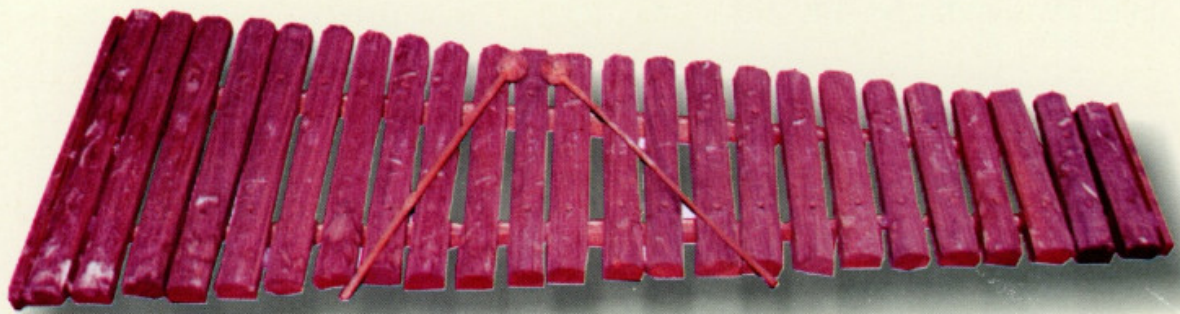


#### 40. KASHTA TARANG

The '*Kashta tarang*' is a percussion musical instrument constructed with pieces of wood of progressively decreasing length mounted on a frame. Its name is derived with two words of Sanskrit, viz., *kashta* meaning “wood “ and *tarang* meaning “wave” (of musical notes). And this instrument is known as 'Xylophone' as well.

In this percussion instrument, each piece of wood gives a separate note of music. These sonorous pieces of wood are struck by a pair of beating sticks with bulbous end.

The *kashta tarang* is performed by beating the pieces of sonorous wood alternately with the beating sticks. While the longer pieces of wood give flat notes, the shorter ones release pleasing notes.



## 41. BURMESE SAWN

This is the typical Burmese harp made on the same principles as that of '*Sengottu Yaazh*' of Ancient Tamils. Its boat-shaped body is made of '*Padauk*' wood (*Pterocarpus macrocarpus*) and is covered with deer skin. The bent arm and the bridge of it are made of '*Shah*' wood (*Acacia catechu*). The Burmese Sawn is further embellished by having studded with semi precious stones (of contrasting white & red) throughout its body.

Its documentary evidence could be traced in the history to the Payan Dynasty of Burma. When Phy-Saw-Hti Min, the third king of Payan Dynasty ascended the throne (circa 268 C.E.) the Burmese Sawn is mentioned as one of the instruments played on that occasion.

It was during the time of king Bo-Daw-Paya (circa 1783 C.E.), his minister Mya-Wa- Di-Min-Gyi constructed the Burmese harp with 13 strings, instead of traditional number of 7. Deva-Ain-Da-Maung Gyi, the musician at the court of King Min - Don and King Thibow added the 14<sup>th</sup> string to this musical instrument, making it still more perfect to play.

Among the Burmese musical instruments the Sawn is considered to be the most perfect one and very difficult to learn. The notes in Burmese music are of 7 in number with 3 ½ octaves, making the total notes to 14. As the string of Sawn do not produce all of them, the missing notes are produced either by plucking 2 strings together thereby producing a beat note or by pressing the string with thumb and plucking. By this method, the note of string is dumped and its pitch varied.





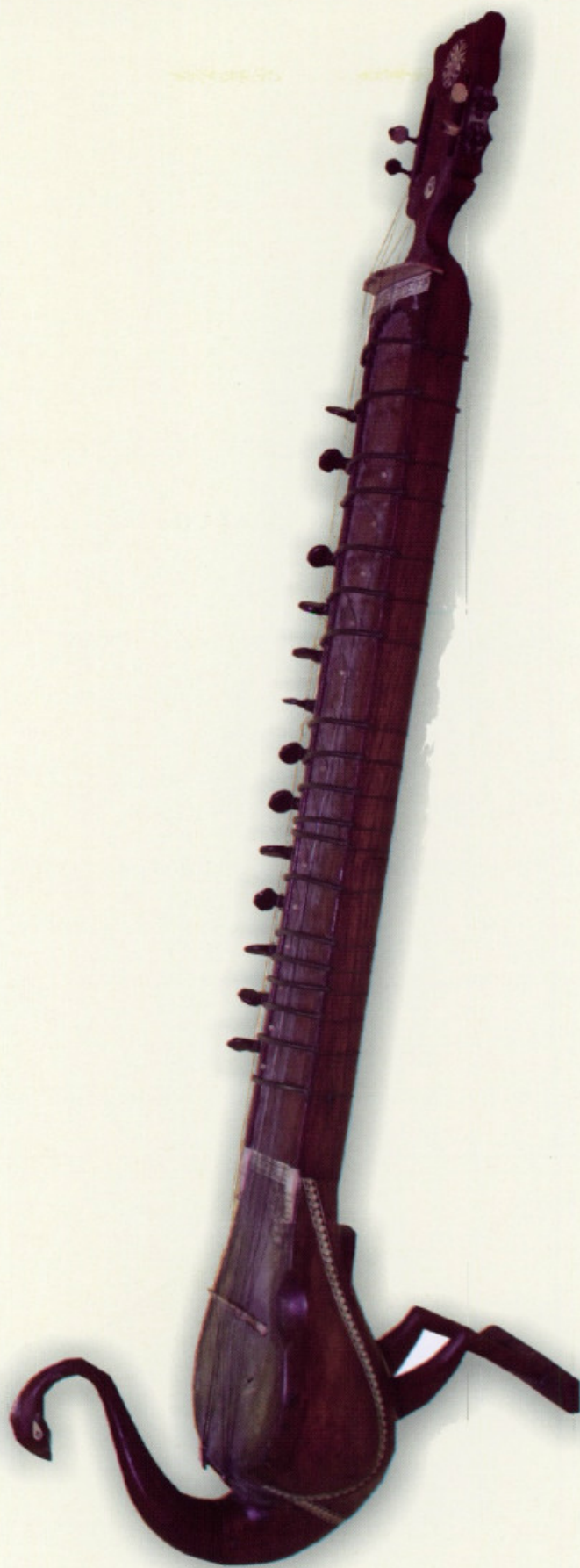
## 42. BALASARASWATI

This string instrument is played with a bow. In shape and construction, it is same as the Sitar. It contains movable frets. Underneath the frets there are sympathetic strings. While the small ivory pegs round which these sympathetic strings pass before reaching the tuning pegs are seen as white dots on the finger-board, the small tuning pegs for these sympathetic strings are seen on the side of the stem. There is a parchment belly over which an ivory bridge is placed.

On playing, the instrument releases a soft, mellow tone. In performance, the right hand handles the bow, while the fore-finger and the middle-finger of the left hand are used to stop the strings on the frets. Like Sitar, this instrument is held in an oblique position- the neck resting on the left shoulder and the legs of peacock resting on the ground and played.

This instrument is embellished with ornate ivory inlays throughout its body. On account of the peacock-like resonator, this is also variedly called '*Mayuri*', 'Peacock Sitar' and 'Peacock Fiddle.'







### **43. CHAIN MAIL**

The warriors were in the habit of wearing protective cover over their body known as 'Chain Mail'. This chain mail from the Tanjore Armoury is fabricated with links of chain, platelets and other required filaments-all of iron-in such a way it serves the purpose of protecting the wearer from attacks by any sort of weapons. The dummy human torso in solid wood highlights the chain mail. An iron trident fitted into a long wooden pole is found attached to the right arm of the dummy. The entire chain mail with its appropriate dummy is made to stand over a small, rectangular platform.

The stability of its component material (viz, iron) despite the passage of time speaks volume of the continued metallurgical skills of ancient Tamilnadu.



#### **44. BRASS - HILTED SHORT SWORD**

The Tanjore Armoury showcases varied types of swords, along with other varieties of weapons of warfare. The brass-hilted short swords of Tanjore Armoury bears one of the zoomorphic motifs of camel, dog, falcon in their hilt. The short and narrow iron blade in contrasting colour to such brass hilt of this type of sword gives an elegant appearance as that of the 'Roman Swords'.

In this exhibit, the highly ornate thick, brass hilt in zoomorphic motif is fixed to short and stumpy blade of iron.





#### 45. CIRCULAR DISC - HILTED LONG SWORD

The Tanjore Armoury of Maratha Dynasty consists of a varied set of arms such as swords, gauntlets, maces, battle axes, spears, daggers, elephant goads, chain mails. Of these, a long sword of circular disc-hilt with depictions of celestial beings bears testimony to the skills in fabrication and embellishment of arms by the Marathas.

The hilt of sword bears a circular disc with depictions of divinities like *Umasahita*, *Mahishasuramartini*, *Bhairava*, *Venugopala*. Motifs of 'Dasavatar' (Lit. "Ten incarnations") and seated 'Ashtadik balakas' (Lit. "Guarding deities of eight directions") on their respective vehicles are depicted at the circular disc-hilt. All these motifs are in brass of golden yellow hue, making the sword appear as 'gold- gilded' ones. The brass filament worn around handle of the hilt reiterates the gold- like appearance to the sword.

The long sword of circular disc-hilt bearing decorated motifs of celestial beings reflects the religious faith of warriors that the victory at battlefield is ensured by the depiction of these divine forces.







#### **46. MACE WITH BUFFALO HEAD MOTIF**

The maces constitute one of the types of lethal weapon utilized in warfare by the Maratha Kings of Tanjore. A mace comprises a long, slender but firm handle that ends in bulbous or club-shaped hit end. Of the various types of mace, a pair of maces is identified with buffalo head and remains as visual treat to the viewing public. The anatomical features of a buffalo head are represented faithfully in this mace.

The buffalo motif is associated with virility, a quint-essential quality requisite of the warriors. As the buffalo is associated with '*Yama*', the god of death (as his vehicle), the craftsperson might have also fabricated the hilt end of weapon with the head of a buffalo.



#### **47. IVORY-HANDLED ELEPHANT GOAD**

An implement fashioned with a tapering, sharp point and a curvy end on one side fitted within a short handle comprises the 'elephant goad'. It is used to control and or attack the elephant. While the curvy end is employed to control the animal, the short and stumpy, sharp point is engaged to attack it in ferry. *Mahouts* and or elephant riders are found to possess and handle the elephant goads.

This elephant goad identified from the Tanjore Armoury is made of iron with handle of ivory. It is really ironical that ivory of an elephant is utilized to fabricate the handle of this goad. Due to passage of time, the ivory handle shows blisters here and there.





#### **48. GLASS-HANDLED ELEPHANT GOAD**

An elephant goad is an iron implement fashioned with a tapering, sharp end and a curvy end both fitted within a short handle. It is employed either to control or attack the elephant. Whereas its curvy end is utilized to control the elephant, the short and stumpy, sharp point of it is employed to attack the animal in fury. *Mahouts* and or elephant riders are observed to possess and handle such elephant goads.

While the hit ends of this elephant goad are of iron, the handle of iron rod is covered by blocks of carved glass, making the exhibit as an aesthetically designed ornate tool.

This exhibit is identified within the Tanjore Armoury.





#### **49. BATTLE AXE OF IRON**

This exhibit is an axe that was used in the battlefields by the then Marathas of Thanjavur. And this exhibits lunately, curvy blade of iron on both sides. The blade of this battle axe is hafted into a short, slender but light-weight rod.

Interestingly, the lunately carved blade of this battle axe is identifiable with intricate workmanship with floral motifs. The floral motif in nickel colour forms a visual treat, as it is embellished over the contrasting black background of iron.



### **50. DAGGER WITH PARAKEET HEAD MOTIF**

The Tanjore Armoury houses varied types of daggers in its possession. A set of daggers with hilt fashioned in the shape of parakeet is one among them.

Interestingly, the main body of this dagger is also made as that of parakeet's body with bends. Consequently, the entire dagger is fashioned as a small, handy parakeet. Such curvy contour of the dagger with tapering end proves it as a lethal weapon when it is stabbed inside the entrails of foe, causing severe damage internally as well.





## 51. DAGGER WITH CENTRAL GLASS BODY

This exhibit is a unique dagger identified within the collection of Tanjore Armoury made up of a central body of hardened glass, with serrated edges of crescent shape on its triangular contour. The hilt and the tapering end of this dagger are crafted out of silver while the gold-gilt of silver portions get eroded due to usual wear and tear owing to passage of time. Whereas the hilt is decorated with motif of *yali*, the tapering end is conjoined with an iron point of slight curvature. A curvy rod emerging from the mouth of *yali* is connected to the hilt. The serration in contour of hardened glass of triangular shape is made blunt in order to avoid inflicting of wounds while handling the dagger. However, even these blunted edges of serration are sure to create grievous injuries to the entrails of foe as and when the dagger is pierced through.

Although the central body of hardened glass of this dagger gives an ornate appearance to it, its efficiency as a lethal weapon could not be underestimated. Incorporation of hardened glass with serration on three sides-of course, with blunted ends ensure penetration into the viscera of foe precisely.

The aesthetic aspect of this dagger is further enhanced by the *yali* motif at its hilt (with a pair of semi-precious stones of red stud for eyes).

It is interesting to note that the hardened glass which finds a place in the rockets of Space Age is perceptible even in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Thus, this dagger stands as a tangible testimony to the technological skills possessed by the people of yesteryears in glass industry.







## 52. TIGER CLAWS OF IRON

The Maratha Dynasty which ruled Tanjore is known as an offshoot lineage of Emperor Sivaji. Accordingly, the Tanjore Armoury is found to possess an interesting and rare lethal weapon, the '*bhag Naag*' (Lit. "tiger's claw"), reminding us the 'tiger claw' used by Sivaji to kill Afzal Khan.

This tiger claw is fabricated in iron with a central hinge so as to hold and hide it within the palm of hand as and when needed. To suit its name, the end of its each digit is fashioned into a curvy, sharp end as that of the claw of a tiger. Altogether, three steel rings are found attached at the back of thumb, index finger and little finger and these rings help the wearer to wear the tiger claws within the fold of his palm firmly.

This exhibit of tiger claw is designed for the left hand.



### **53. BATTLE SHIELD OF IRON**

As protective tool in warfare, the battle shield is fashioned usually in broad, circular form. The Tanjore Armoury too possesses a pair of shields of iron.

The outer side of this battle shield is slightly convex while its inner side is provided with a short & stumpy and horizontal rod to hold it easily. Four small knobs with sharp point are fixed close to the centre, on its exterior. And these are provided in the shield to deflect all sorts of sharp edged weapons such as sword, spear and thereby protect the holder from ferocious attacks of enemies in the battlefield.





#### **54. GAUNTLET SWORD WITH ELEPHANT HEAD MOTIF**

A long sword with a protective plate covering up to elbow of the warrior constitutes the 'gauntlet'. The protective plate of gauntlet is provided with a short, horizontal rod so as to hold the weapon firmly. The bulbous protective plate is usually embellished with head of either *yali* or elephant or tiger. And this decorative portion is made up of iron, copper or brass.

In this gauntlet, the ornate protective plate of copper is fabricated into an elephant head while the blade of sword in iron is fashioned as a long, broad but tapering one.

The massiveness of the gauntlet gives an indication that the warriors who handled it might have possessed good physique.







### **55. SPEAR WITH BATTLE AXE PROJECTION**

Of all the weapons in its stock, the Tanjore Armoury of Maratha Dynasty was observed to possess varied types of spearheads and consequently the spears. And this exhibit is a short and stumpy spear with a side projection in the shape of battle axe. Hence, it is presumed to be fashioned for two way operations of both spear and battle axe.

The blade of spearhead and the battle axe projection (both in iron) are fitted and hafted on a wooden pole for effective usage.



## **56. GUN POWDER FLASK OF BRASS**

The English East India Company employed front-loading fire arms in the form of rifles and cannons. As these front-loading fire arms were in need of frequent re-filling of gun powder, the flasks which store gun powder were also carried in battlefields.

The Government Museum, Chennai which contains normally such gun powder flasks in iron is observed to possess an ornate gun powder flask in brass as well. This exhibit of gun powder flask in brass is flat, vase-shaped and light in weight in contradistinction to the usual iron flasks which are spherical and heavy. Its narrow mouth is fitted with a movable nozzle along the side way. The entire body of flask is embellished with floral decorations in engravings.

This highly ornate gun powder flask of brass appears to be golden yellow in hue.





### **57. FIRE ARM WITH GOLD INLAY WORKS**

This exhibit of fire arm identified from the collection of English East India Company excels in aesthetics, as its body gets embellished with gold inlay works resulting into formation of floral designs.

The history of this weapon conveys that it was embellished with inlay works of golden filigree and gifted to King Serfoji by the English East India Company in order to allure sanction of establishing trade centre at the Maratha ruled Tanjore arena.

The inlaid filigree of gold was identified to have been removed from the butt end of this front-loading double-barreled gun even while this exhibit was acquired by the Government Museum, Chennai. The imprints left behind by removal of inlaid gold filigrees give us the clear idea that fine grooves were engraved over the wooden body of gun and later on the gold filigrees were impregnated over these grooves completing the formation of floral design of gold inlay works.



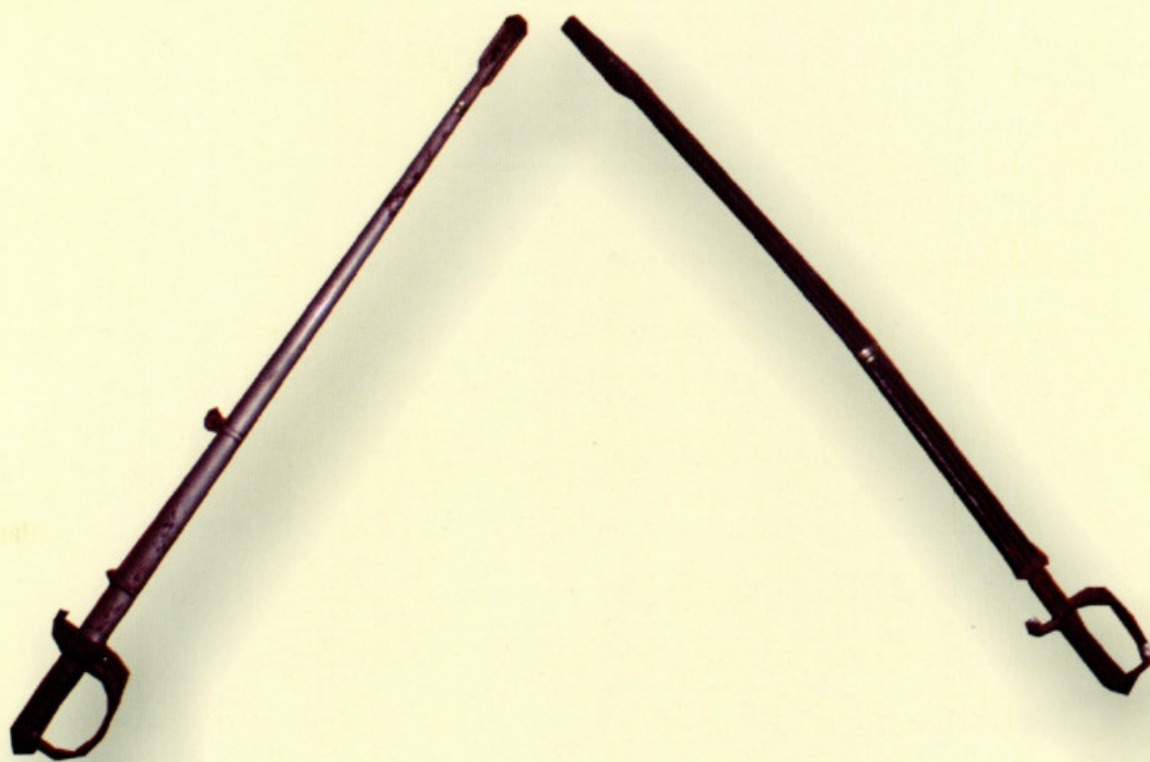




### **58. SWORDS WITH STEEL SHEATH**

This pair of swords which get protected in steel sheath belonged to Robert Clive of the English East India Company. The stainless steel body of protective sheath is provided with steel rings as well so as to loop the weapon with leather straps and wear it along with the official costume.

The iron blade of these swords is flat and provided with non-pointed and circular end, conveying that these swords might have been used only as ceremonial weapons but not as weapons of warfare.



### **59. CANNON WITH TIGER MOTIFS**

This exhibit of cannon with motifs of tiger head is one of the war trophies acquired by the English East India Company through Mysore War IV.

This cannon with embellishment of tiger heads on its front, back and sideways was used by Tipu Sultan of Srirangapatnam, near Mysore and captured from the battlefield in 1799 where he attained martyrdom after a glorious fight for safeguarding his mother land.

Tipu Sultan considered himself as the 'tiger' set against the lion (the English) and accordingly he was fond of incorporating the motif of tiger in weapons of warfare as well.

As this cannon with motifs of tiger head is provided with a pair of wheels, it stands as an ornate and full-fledged cannon, attracting the visitors by its majestic appearance.

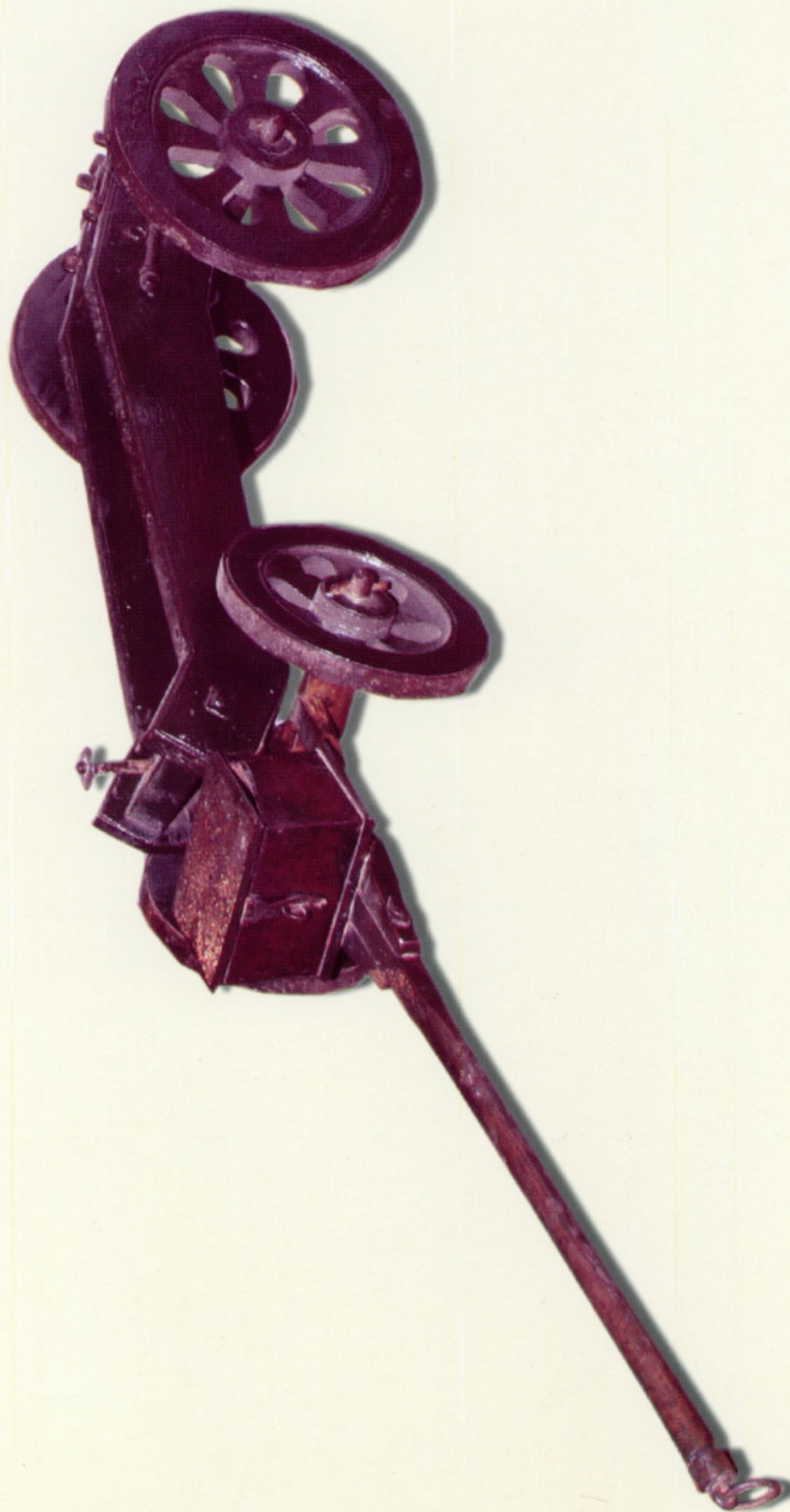




## **60. MODEL OF A GUN CARRIAGE**

The cannons were fashioned usually as a massive structure with attachment of wheels so as to row over rough terrain during warfare. The requisite ammunitions and associated weapons of warfare were carried to the battlefields in a carriage known as 'gun carriage'.

This exhibit is a model of a gun carriage that was in use by the English East India Company. The single, long, horizontal bar is used to tie the horse for this horse-driven vehicle. A centrally placed rectangular box located in its front is used as the 'ammunition box' to store and carry the ammunition safely. The adjoining truck (of carriage) is utilized to mount and carry the cannons, guns, etc., to distant place during war period.





### **61. CAGE GALLOWS WITH WOODEN BEAM**

This pair of cage gallows in iron hung from a beam of country wood was acquired from Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh of the then Madras Presidency. The bodies of criminals notified by the Government were hung in public within these cage gallows.

As people in general want to dispose the mortal remains of their kindreds in a decent manner, they did not like the dead bodies of their close relatives being hung in public places and get putrefied and later being eaten away by predatory birds and animals.

To inculcate the fear psychosis in the minds of general people on the ill-effects of being anti-government, in the British India, the rebels were first subjected to capital punishment and then their dead bodies were put inside the cage gallows for public display.



## **62. CAGE GALLOW IN ANTHROPOMORPHIC FRAME**

The British Raj in India had employed iron cage gallows in the shape of anthropomorphic frames as well to display the dead bodies of rebels for public viewing.

After carrying out the capital punishment the dead body of the victim will be put up for public show within this cage gallows in anthropomorphic frame.

In the Indian tradition, the people always wanted to see the mortal remains of their relatives disposed of in a decent way. On encashing this sort of sentiments, the officials of British India wanted to inculcate the fear psychosis in the minds of people in general and rebels in particular. To effect this, exhibits like the cage gallows were highly useful.





### **63. CHINA BELL AS OPIUM WAR TROPHY**

The Government Museum, Chennai houses a number of war trophies acquired by the English East India Company, through various wars it encountered. Of them, a pair of bells augmented from China during the notorious opium war adorns the foyer of Anthropology Galleries.

These bells are devoid of a central thong, as natural to the Chinese bells which are usually stricken with an external beater on the side.

Chinese letters in embossed condition (from top to bottom) of the bell are discernible on the outer contour of the bell.







#### **64. SPANISH ARMOURY AS MANILA WAR TROHPY**

The English East India Company had conquered a number of nations and subsequently brought with it several war trophies as memorabilia reminiscent of those victorious moments. A set of 'Spanish Amours' obtained from the erstwhile Manila. (, presently the Philippines) inclusive of massive helmets, breast plates sustains the glory by withstanding the ravages of time.

The heaviness of these armours not only conveys us that the warriors who wear them possessed well- built body but also the artisans who fashioned them excelled in skills of ironsmithy.



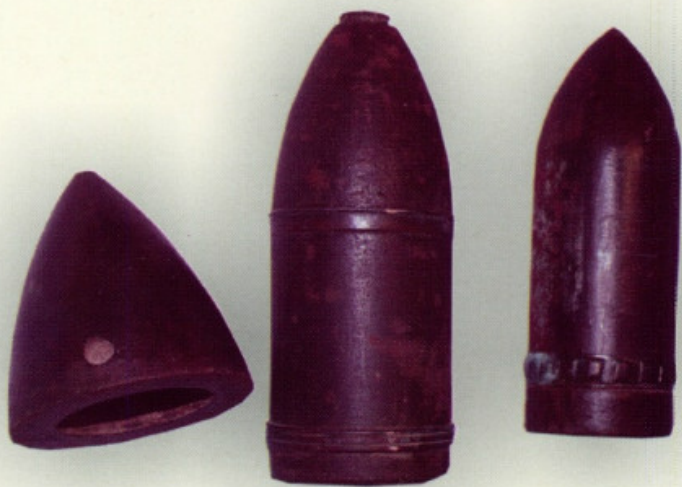
## **65. REMNANTS OF EMDEN BOMB SHELLS**

Dr. Champakaraman, the Indian freedom fighter who navigated in Cruiser 'Emden' from Germany to various places, including Madras (during 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1914), on reaching Madras arranged to bombard it by bomb shells hurled from Emden. One of the bomb shells destroyed a portion of the Madras High Court while another one was buried within the sand near the Fort St. George. Contrary to these, one bomb enflamed the then Burma Shell Company situated near the Burma Bazaar.

The Government Museum, Chennai possesses various remnants of Emden bomb shells (inclusive of shrapnels, cap, partly exploded and unexploded) acquired through various sources.

The bombardment carried out by Cruiser Emden occurred in lightning speed and the 'Emden Ship' disappeared from the waters of India even before its presence was realized by the people of Madras. And hence, in Tamilnadu, capable persons were thenceforth attributed usually as 'Emden'.





### SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

- |                                    |       |   |
|------------------------------------|-------|---|
| Aiyappan, A.                       | 1941. | Socio-Economic Conditions of the Tribes of Madras<br>Presidency Madras: Government Press.   |
| Breeks, J.W.                       | 1873. | An Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments of<br>the Nilgiris. Madras: Government Press.  |
| Das, S.R.                          | 1968. | Stone Tools: History and Origins. Calcutta : Pilgrim<br>Publishers.   |
| Devasahayam, N.                    | 1973. | Puppets in the Collection of the Madras Government<br>Museum. Madras: Government Museum.  |
| Foote, R.B.                        | 1914. | The Foote Collection of Indian Prehistoric and<br>Protohistoric Antiquities. Madras: Government Press.  |
| Foote, R.B.                        | 1916. | The Foote Collection of Indian Prehistoric and<br>Protohistoric Antiquities: Their Notes on Ages and<br>Distribution. Madras: Government Press. |
| Gurumurthy, S.                     | 1981. | Ceramic Traditions in South India (Madras University.<br>Archaeological Series – No.4) Madras: University of<br>Madras.                         |
| Jayadev, C.J.                      | 1964. | Guide to the Anthropological Exhibits. Madras:<br>Government Museum.  |
| Kannan, R. &<br>R. Balasubramanian | 2000. | Documentation on the Cannons in the Government<br>Museum, Chennai (Madras). Chennai : Government<br>Museum.                                     |
| Maheswaran, C.                     | 2010. | The Embroidered Textiles of the Toda Tribes of the<br>Nilgiris. Chennai : Government Museum.  |
| Maheswaran, C.                     | 2010. | Tribal and Folk Culture Studies. Chennai :<br>Government Museum.  |
| Sambamoorthy, P.                   | 1955. | Catalogue of Musical Instruments exhibited in the<br>Government Museum, Chennai. Chennai: Government<br>Museum.                                 |







